

Telephone Remarks to a Dinner for Congressional Candidate Mike Ross
October 13, 2000

The President. Well, let me first of all thank John and Penny for hosting this. And I want to thank Marion Berry and Vic Snyder for being there for you. They can speak more eloquently than I can about how important it is for Arkansas that you be elected and how wonderful it would be if they had a genuine partner that was always working for Arkansas and not just at election time.

I have to tell you, Mike, I noticed the other day that the Republicans put in a little money for a bridge down in southeast Arkansas, and I think the voters—they ought to give you credit for it. *[Laughter]* I was trying to get them to give me the money for the bridge, and until you got to where you could beat Jay Dickey, they never thought about springing for it. So I think that ought to be called the Ross Bridge, if we ever get it built. *[Laughter]*

Let me say just one thing very seriously. This is a very different country than it was 8 years ago, and Arkansas is in a lot better shape than it was 8 years ago. The economy is better. The crime rate is down. The welfare rolls are lower. More children have health insurance. We're giving more constructive aid to our schools. And every single policy that was implemented—most importantly, going from a \$290 billion deficit to a \$230 billion surplus and turning this economy around—was implemented because I had the support of Democrats in the Congress.

And the Republicans basically fought our economic policy. They fought our welfare policy. They fought our crime policy. They fought our education policy. They fought our environmental policy. They fought all of our economic policies. They did give us a farm bill that Marion Berry and I told them wouldn't work, back in '95. And sure enough, we were right; it wouldn't work.

And now, basically, the people of south Arkansas have to decide whether they're going to keep this country moving in a good direction, or vote for someone who comes home every weekend but then goes back to Washington and votes against them. And I'll just use one example.

These ads that the so-called Citizens for Better Medicare are running against Mike Ross,

because he's a pharmacist who believes that all of our seniors ought to be able buy prescription drugs, are scandalous. And they're typical of what the Republicans all over America are trying to do. They come home every weekend and tell the folks they love them. Then they go back to Washington and they vote for the vested interest. Then they got those interest groups to give them money to run bogus ads to confuse the voters back home. That's basically what is going on here.

And I just know that if Mike Ross gets enough financial support to be able to compete with this avalanche of special interest money that's being spent against him, the voters in south Arkansas will vote for him, because he'll work just as hard as Mr. Dickey at coming home on the weekends and keeping up with his constituents. Then he'll go back to Washington and actually vote for them, for a Medicare prescription drug program, for a Patients' Bill of Rights, for paying off the debt instead of having a tax cut so big we'll be in debt from now on—these are really, really important issues—and for helping our schools.

You know, I really believe that Mike can win this race, and I believe he will win this race, as long as the people who are rewarding his opponent for voting with them instead of the people of south Arkansas can't run enough ads to turn this election into a smokescreen. So I am profoundly grateful to all of you for helping him. He's a fine man. I have known him for nearly 20 years. He was a teenager when he started working for me. *[Laughter]* And when I'm gone from Washington, he'll be a Congressman, thanks to you. Thank you very, very much.

Mike, let me just say one other thing. I just wanted to say, on a very serious note and kind of a nonpolitical note, as you know, I badly wanted to be there tonight. I have been working for the last 8 days trying to restore calm in the Middle East, and I've been on the phone all day today and have some more work to do late tonight. And I'm terribly sorry I could not be there. But after the loss of our sailors in Yemen yesterday and the continued violence in the Middle East, I just thought I had to stay here and work. We may get a breakthrough

sometime in the next several hours. We're working hard, trying to turn this thing around. I hope you'll all say a prayer for us tonight, and I hope you'll forgive me for not being there. But just know that it has nothing to do with my profound desire to see you elected.

State Senator Ross. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, very much. We're going to win this thing. We're going to win it for you. We're going to win it for the Democratic Party.

The President. Thank you. And thank you, Vic. Thank you, Marion, and thanks, John and Penny. Goodbye, folks. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:12 p.m. from the Residence at the White House to the dinner at a private residence in Little Rock, AR. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts John and Penny Burkhalter. State Senator Mike Ross was a candidate for Arkansas' Fourth Congressional District. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on the Situation in the Middle East

October 14, 2000

Good morning. As you know, we have been working for more than a week now to try to persuade the parties in the Middle East to find a way out of the recent cycle of violence, find a way back to negotiations. I'm very pleased that Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat have accepted President Mubarak's invitation to attend a summit at Sharm al-Sheikh. The summit will convene this Monday, and in the meantime, we expect that both parties will do all in their power to cease hostilities and halt the violence.

Our central objectives must now be to stop the violence, to restore calm and safety, to agree on a factfinding mechanism concerning how this began and how it can be prevented from occurring again, and to find a way back to dialog and negotiations.

Now, we should be under no illusions. The good news is, the parties have agreed to meet, and the situation appears to be calmer. But the path ahead is difficult. After the terrible events of the past few days, the situation is still quite

tense. But President Mubarak and I are convinced that we must make every effort to break the cycle of violence.

Now, as all of you know, I have to go to Denver. I'm running a little late. But the truth is, we're in that period of time where, I believe, leading up to the summit, the less those of us say who are going to be there, the better. And so at least for the moment, I want to let my statement stand for itself. But I assure you I will continue to do everything I can to minimize the violence and to do all the preparation necessary to maximize the chances of a successful meeting.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:38 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.

The President's Radio Address

October 14, 2000

Good morning. This week an apparent terrorist attack claimed the lives of brave American sailors off the coast of Yemen, and new violence

erupted between Israelis and Palestinians in the Middle East.

Our sailors aboard the U.S.S. *Cole* were simply doing their duty, but a dangerous duty,